WORLD BUDDHISM

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WILL BRITAIN GO BUDDHIST ?

By Donald Soper

THE Revival of Buddhism has come just in time to save the world from the chaos into which Christendom has plunged it.

It may astound cosy church-goers in the West, but this is what is being said with increasing assurance from Colombo to Mandalay.

And the Buddhist missionaries now arriving to convert heathen England will soon be saying it here. Indeed some of them are already at work breaking down the suspicions and superstitions of the natives and sending back their first reports that the "harvest is ripe even if the labourers are few".

Looked at from the stand-point of a Ceylon villager near a naval base like Trincomalee, or against the back-cloth of a hydrogen bomb explosion in the South Seas, the prospect of the overthrow of Christianity by a gentler faith like Buddhism seems not only eminently desirable, but severely practical.

I would think that the single most calamitous effect, among many deplorable consequences of the Suez escapade, has been that millions of brown, black and yellow people who up to last autumn were still anxious to give official Christianity the benefit of the doubt have now written it off as incorrigible.

CHRISTIAN WEST

A brown man looking at the so-called Christian West today will, if he is honest, recognise the tremendous contribution that it has made to the education of the world.

He will be in no doubt about the potential blessings that have been made possible for mankind as a whole by the amazing technical achievements of Christendom.

He will not doubt the benevolence and self-sacrifice of countless representatives of the European Christian Culture.

At the same time he will see that the characteristic expression of all this Christian culture (and European Communism is just as much a product of that culture as is the Roman Chatholic Church) is unprecedented violence.

What I am pleading for is the attempt that we must make before it is too late to see ourselves as those brown men now see us. If the words of Jesus "By their fruits ye shall know them" are to be taken as a criterion, then whatever good trees there are to be found in the Christian orchard, the orchard as a whole appears blighted and its fruit looks evil.

A CHALLENGE

I for one cannot, and do not intend to try to avoid this conclusion, but rather to accept it is a challenge even though others regard it as a knell.

The words of Chesterton are still true—"Christianity hasn't been tried and found wanting, it has been found difficult and not tried".

In the name of Christianity, Christendom must be repudiated. Western civilisation is not a blueprint of the Kingdom of God, and the hydrogen bomb is not a symbol of anything remotely connected with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The quite evil identification of the public acts of European and north American countries with the Christian faith must be broken.

However fondly we look upon our way of life as the continuation in our lives of the way of the cross—by any objective standards it could just as reasonably be regarded as "the broad way that leadeth to destruction".

Ven. Narada Thera in Peking

AT the invitation of the Buddhist Association of China, Ven. Narada Thera of Ceylon arrived in Peking on July 24 on a Buddhist Goodwill Mission.

On the day after his arrival he paid his respects to the Buddha's Tooth Relic.

During his short stay he gave lectures on meditation and Abhidhamma to the student monks of the Buddhist Academy. The Buddhist Association made arrangements for him to visit the most important temples in Peking, the Great Wall of China and other places of interest.

In the course of his memorable and interesting interview with the Premier he complimented him on the present material prosperity of the country and on having banned racing, gambling and prostitution in China.

He expressed his pleasure on having established a Department for Religious Affairs and on the freedom of religious worship that prevails in New China.

The Premier asserted that there was complete freedom to practise and propagate one's religion. It was true, he added, that the new Government was opposed to subversive political activities of some foreign missionaries.

In memory of his visit to Peking the Ven. Narada, presenting a relic of the Buddha to the Buddhist Association, remarked that China has had a glorious past and would have a still more glorious future if she would work for her material development without ignoring her spiritual progress. He wished that the relic of the Buddha would conduce to the genuine peace and happiness of China.

The Ven. Narada left Peking on August 1 to spend his Vassa in Singapore before he resumed his world Buddhist Goodwill Mission.

Letter to the Editor

Buddhist Society of Tasmania

A recent comment by the Editor of "Metta", the journal of the Buddhist Society of New South Wales, in your Readers' Letters column prompts me to write to you to tell you something of the present state of the Buddhist Society of Tasmania.

Tasmania is the smallest State in the Australian Commonwealth, with a population of a little over 300,000. Hobart, the capital, together with outlying suburbs, contains nearly one third of that number. Our membership consequently, is very small. Something between 12 and 24, depending on whether only the faithful attenders at meetings are counted, or those others who are more or less interested but not very active.

We meet every 4 to 5 weeks at the home of one or other of our number. Our meetings, like our society, are loosely organised and usually take the form of informal discussions and lectures.

We are all intensely interested in Buddhism, but I don't know if there is one among us who would claim to be a practising Buddhist. To most of us, organised religion is unwelcome. Over-organisation is what has turned us away from Christianity and we suspect the same thing in any other religion.

By organisation I mean a more or less rigid priesthood, body of doctrines, practices and formulae. To follow any religion which displayed those features would to us seem to offer no particular advantage over Christianity, though the aspect of Buddhism which commends itself most strongly to me personally is Buddhism's agnostic or atheistic character. All the more reason for dispensing with rigidity forms and authoritarianism.

From this, and from our lack of knowledge it follows that we have no particular axe to grind as far as the different schools of Buddhism are concerned. However, inasmuch as we may favour any particular variety it seems that Zen Buddhism, in particular, is of some interest to most of us. We have as yet not succeeded in making contact with anyone in Japan. If you should be able to help us make some such contact we would be greatly indebted to you.

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NEW CONVERTS TO BUDDHISM IN INDIA

By W. M. GODBOLE

(General Secretary, Bharatiya Bouddha Mahasabha, Nagpur).

Bharatiya Bouddha Mahasabha, the prime religious organisation of the neo-Buddhists of India, which had appealed to the Government of India as well as the State Governments to declare continuance of the various concessions to the neo-Buddhists, was surprised to see the sudden change in the mood of the Government of India and the State Government of Bombay to the effect of denying the concessions to them.

While the State Government of Kerala is worthy of praise for its bold step, the whole Buddhist Community as well as the Indian intelligentsia resent the unhappy decision of the Bombay Government in so far as it is acting contrary to the spirit of the Indian Constitution and its avowed policy of helping the under-developed section of the Community in the larger interest of the all-round development of the nation as a whole.

New Buddhists Forfeit Guarantees

MEMBERS of the Scheduled Castes who embrace Buddhism will not be eligible for any of the constitutional guarantees and advantages accorded to the Scheduled Castes, says a message from New Delhi.

The Home Ministry, Government of India, is understood to have given a decision to this effect on a reference made to it by the Scheduled Castes Federation.

Under the Constitution, members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are entitled to reserved seats in the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies and for preference in employment under the Union and State Governments.

They also get certain special grants and educational concessions.

After carefully studying and analysing the relevant speeches and proclamations of the officials and spokesmen of the Governments, this Mahasabha, instead of accepting the decision of the Governments to be a mere change in their policy, would be justified to characterise it as anti-national, the decision having been intentionally taken with prejudiced mind to suppress the highly social, moral and spiritual revolution initiated into the socially backward Indian life, with the bringing into its homeland the "Sat-Dhamma", viz. Buddhism.

The Chief Minister of Bombay, Mr. Y. B. Chavan, while speaking in the Bombay Legislative Assembly made a reference to some of the speeches of the so-called political leaders of the neo-Buddhists, e.g., the demand for Bouddhasthan, rousing the communal feelings with a view to achieve disruption in the unity in the nation etc. He further entreated the members to be cautious in the matter to avoid far-reaching consequences.

Many would doubt the prudence of the Government of Bombay for making some of the Scheduled Castes Federation leaders—the show-boys — the shield against the forthcoimng attack on their policy.

If the Government judges the strength of the following behind the Scheduled Castes Feder-

ation leaders and from the S. C. Federation members in the present Legislature they will be grossly mistaken.

It is not at all at the instance of these leaders or their guidance that these members were voted; but it was due to the love and respect for their departed leader and his organisation that they voted for the members who are now occupying the seats in the Legislative Assembly.

The masses of people are, however, now realising that the so-called henchmen of the leader are proving treacherous to the cause and work started by him by adopting plans and policies detrimental to his life-long teachings.

It should be noted that the Bharatiya Bouddha Mahasabha was established by the late leader to promote the spread of Buddhism in India, and according to the registered constitution of the Mahasabha all work concerning the promotion and the spread of Buddhism was delegated to the Mahasabha only.

Thus it was not for S.C. Federation to interfere in or take on itself the work falling under the jurisdiction of the Mahasabha. But the S.C.F. leaders seem to have their own way and they did trespass into the sphere of the Mahasabha.

MISCHIEF

In the name of the 'Presidium', a term devised to misguide the masses as a substitute for the late Baba Saheb, the S.C.F. leaders have done sufficient mischief by going beyond their own jurisdiction in initiating the people into Buddhism without in the least caring for the sanctified methods and systems to be followed in such ceremonies, and in openly declaring, in contravention to the teachings of the great leader, that there is no place, in the Presidium for the Buddhist Bhikkhus, who trace their lineage to the Enlightened One Himself. Thus indeed as some one had previously pointed out, they have started Buddhism, after their own pattern.

The most scientific religion, Buddhism, has been made the subject of mockery by introducing conflicting codes in the social and religious life of the people.

They have started a cold war offensive against the true tenets of Buddhism. The S.C.F. leaders have furthered the mischief by monopolising and restricting its membership to the members of the Scheduled Castes only for fear of losing their leadership with the entrance of able leaders of the other communities into the Buddhist fold.

It is not only the common masses who are resenting this treacherous move of the S.C.F. leaders. There are many workers and even the majority of the leaders among the neo-Buddhists who are opposed to this kind of move which, they feel, is against the very fundamental principles taught by the departed leader.

PROPAGATION

They hold the view that the propagation of any religion by any progressive political party would mean closing the particular political party's doors to the members of other religions.

In the same way to take into hand the running of any particular religious organisation by any political party would tantamount to closing the doors of that particular religion to the members holding other political views.

Thus in both cases the progress of both the organisations, religious as well as political, are hampered if political and religious issues are wrongly handled.

The camera meeting of the leaders of the S.C.F. held at Nagpur in April, 1957 created sufficient heat over this ideological point of difference resulting in a big split. The logical sequence of all this clearly shows that the official group of the S.C.F. leaders will insist going their own way and after dissolution of the S.C.F. the formation of the Republican Party will be a mere change in the name from the S.C.F. to the National Republican Party of India. Thus it would be having old wine in a new bottle.

It should, however, be noted here that the leaders who will not be satisfied with this mere change of name will not remain mere spectators to such an important occasion; but would take steps to establish a real 'Republican Party of India'.

This Republican Party will not be confined to one community and one religion but will be open to all communities and all religions, and is expected to play an important part in the service to the nation.

OWN CREATION

It is clear therefore, that the leaders of the S.C.F. have invited their own extinction; and so we ask the State Government as to why they should irritate innocent and orphan-like subjects and harm their cause by discontinuing their concessions at the instance of the so-called leaders of the S.C.F.

We fail to understand why the Government should at all mix two distinct and separate issues—that of the concessions on the one hand and the irresponsible utterances of the leaders on the other.

Even if the S.C.F. leaders be charged for their inflammable speeches it does not in the least prove that the neo-Buddhists were in any way responsible for the outbreak of heated atmosphere between them and the Castes Hindus. On the contrary it is quite likely that speeches of that kind would provoke the caste Hindus against the neo-Buddhists.

We are frank to admit that at some places the situation has developed in the manner like this. The Mahasabha openly denounces such actions and regrets to note that in more than 99 per cent cases our Caste Hindu brethren have unnecessarily started harassing the neo-Buddhists and have even gone to the extent of utilizing the inhuman weapons of the good old days for suppressing the desire of the neo-Buddhists simply to live like human beings.

It is indeed an irony of fate that the neo-Buddhists should suffer at the hands of the Caste Hindus for discontinuing to participate in their puja, religious rites, and processions, to worship their deities, to get the rites performed by the Brahmins, to worship them as superior men, to beg at their doors, to eat remains out of their dishes, to remove the dead bodies of their animals, and to succumb to all sorts of maltreatment that degrade human honour and is inimical to the human ideal of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

The situation has developed to such an extent that what the entire Scheduled Castes did not suffer in the last four centuries the neo-Buddhists have been suffering since the last four months. They are socially boycotted, even the essentials of life are barred to them.

Taking into consideration the overall situation the Government, in fact, should come to their rescue and give them more safeguards and protection. It is really an act of injustice that even their legitimate demand for continuing their educational and economic concessions is turned down on the most unreasonable ground.

It is really a pity that the Government should at a stroke, treat the neo-Buddhists on par with the Muslim and Christian converts. Do they not know that it was during the long process of about seven to eight centuries that the people accepted the Mohammedan faith—largely during the time of the invasion and that of the Moghul imperialism.

FORCE AND BAITS

The conversion was not due to any inherent goodness in the faith but was mostly due to force and at times to baits of service, jagiri etc. Do they also need to be told about the conversion to Christianity? Is not the Niyogi Report sufficient to show that the conversion to the Christian faith was also backed by powerful agencies ?

Does the Government smell even such a thing in respect of Buddhist converts ? If not, will it not be wise for the Government to discriminate between these two types of conversions ?

Can the Government show that there was ever any mass problem of concessions etc. at the time of the change of faith to Mohammedanism or Christianity ? If the Government thinks that there is no legal bar for them to treat non-Buddhist converts on par with Christian and Muslim, it is certainly bound by moral law to discriminate be-

tween them as the basis for conversion vary as shown above. After all laws are meant for men; not men for laws.

In this particular case the Government is not even required to change the laws of the State for continuing the concessions to the neo-Buddhists. If at all a change in the law of the State is required it would be in the case of discontinuing the concessions.

WELCOME FEATURE

It is the welcome feature of our nation that in the days that followed the hard-won independence it could withstand the monstrous calamities, *e.g.* the refugee problem, the food problem, the flood and famine problem, etc.; and despite these hindrances could successfully accomplish the first Five-Year Plan.

The Government is spending tons of money over these plans with a view to achieve all-round development of the nation. If so, how can it afford to neglect such a large portion of the Indian community ? Is it not inconsistent to talk of all-round development of the nation and at the same time to keep a large section of the community underdeveloped by taking away their means of progress ?

From figures published by the Government itself, it is seen that the community is so much underdeveloped that within such a long period of concession it could reap only about 25 per cent of the total facilities given to it.

The overnight change of faith does not mean a rise in the economical status of the community, and so the withdrawal of their concessions cannot be but an anti-national move.

After all what the community has done by accepting Buddhism is that it has obeyed the dictates of not only their cherished leader, the late Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, but also Pandit Nehru, the beloved leader of the nation; and by doing so they have taken the vow not to kill, steal, lie, commit adultery and drink alcohol.

These are the things which build the nation on the one hand, and on the other, they save substantial revenue which would otherwise be required to deal with the offences.

One who cares to know would really marvel at the progress of the community by adopting in full these fundamental ideals of Buddhism.

The Government should not find excuses against concessions on the ground of shortage of funds. The sources that would have provided for these concessions, had there been no change of faith, remain unaffected even after the change of faith. Moreover, as shown above, the mass conversion has increased the revenue by saving wasteful expenditure.

Considerations from every point of view go to show that it is not desirable for the Government to deprive the neo-Buddhists of the concessions they were getting in their educational and economic fields.

To take away these concessions under the present day conditions would only mean that the Government intend to suppress the Buddhist religious movement to save Hinduism from extinction. This would mean again that the Government is not able to maintain the secular spirit of the nation.

ASOKAN PRINCIPLES

Our Government proclaims that it is following the principles of the Great Asoka in ruling the country. We would humbly request the Government to study carefully from the inscriptions the policy and methods Asoka adopted during his rule. Our present Government with Asoka as its guide should set a precedent for the successors to follow.

On behalf of the neo-Buddhists of India, this Mahasabha earnestly requests the Government as well as the State Government of Bombay to reconsider the problem and take back their decision in the interest of not only the neo-Buddhists but the nation as a whole.

The Mahasabha further requests the other State Governments to consider sympathetically the problem and declare the continuance of the concessions.

The Mahasabha has decided to hold a convention of all its office-bearers, workers and sympathisers throughout India to take stock of the situation and to find out ways and means to meet the problems that come in the way of promoting the spread of Buddhism in India.

Although it is not possible at this stage to visualise the line of action the Mahasabha would then take, one can be assured that the Mahasabha would not take recourse to means other than constitutional.

BURMESE GET EARLY TRAINING IN RELIGIOUS PIETY

By U. Htin Gyi

A SMART printer in Rangoon, Burma, once put out a calendar with a beautiful "pin-up" cover in colour. He had high hopes of outselling other calendars on the market which were very badly printed and had atrocious advertisements round the pictures on the covers.

But the smart printer went out of business while his competitors continued to bring out edition after edition.

The explanation was simple; their calendars had pictures of Lord Buddha on the cover, and people chose them for religious reasons as well as utilitarian purposes.

Many villagers place these calendar-covers with a picture of the Buddha in the corner of their house which serves as a place of worship, and even sophisticated city-dwellers often have them at the head of their beds as a mark of veneration.

A good Buddhist spends hours studying religious writings. The Burmese alphabet is accorded respect almost religious in intensity. That is the reason why footwear sold in Burma bears no trademark in the Burmese language, for it would be sacrilege for a Burmese to "step on" the Burmese alphabet.

BEGINS EARLY

Much of this kind of religious piety begins with early training in the *phongyikyaungs* or monastic schools. Village boys (and in many cases girls too) usually receive their education at these schools because every village has at least one *phongyikyaung* (Burma has about 18,000 villages).

From the age of five till about ten, boys are put in the care of *phongyis* or monks who preside at the monasteries. In the morning the children go out and collect breakfast for the monks, and only then do they get their own breakfast. Washing of bowls and plates is the chore of monastic pupils irrespective of the status of their parents. A headman's son has to wash dishes just like the son of a poor village labourer.

In the afternoon, the boys receive religious instruction and are taught the three R's. Many of the villagers' sons live, eat and study at the monasteries.

Ten years is the age at which a boy is usually initiated into monkhood.

It is a belief among Buddhists that parents gain much merit in a future existence if, before they die, their son or sons are initiated as novices.

INITIATION

There is much grandeur and pomp at the initiation ceremony. The boy who is about to become a novice is known as *shinlaung*. He is dressed in fine clothes "just like a prince" and in fact he is elevated to the rank of a prince even though his parents may belong to the lowest strata of society. Thus richly attired, the *shinlaungs* ride on horseback in procession under the shade of golden umbrellas.

However, these glorious moments are short-lived. After a huge feast, the *shinlaungs* have to discard their princely garments and their heads are shaved. Then they go through the ceremony known as "begging for robes". This is a kind of ritual at which the novices-to-be repeat from memory the stanzas of Pali.

After hearing their request of the yellow robes, the presiding monk gives his permission and the *shinlaungs* receive the complete outfit of a monk. From then on, they are known as *kovins* (young monks) and are allowed to take only one meal a day and that before noon. They are now regarded as "sons of Buddha" and rank even higher than their parents who can no longer address them as sons. They are reverently called by their new religious names and their parents have to *shikho* (kowtow) to them.

The *koyins* are confined to the monasteries where they eat and learn. Some only stay there a short time (say about a week), while others may remain for years.

In this way Burmese village boys receive free education. At the same time board and bed are free, so their parents do not incur any expenses.

Koyins and monastic pupils are required to follow the monks wherever the latter go. They are present at opening ceremonies of buildings and houses and also attend funerals to enable the departed to share the blessings of the bereaved family's meritorious deeds.

These ceremonies illustrate the transiency of earthly life, and in the course of religious instruction the monks teach the Buddha's doctrine to their pupils.

Burmese, as Buddhists are taught to respect their parents, elders and teachers. Paying respect to elders is a tradition among the Burmese. Since independence, the cultural revival has done much to stimulate such practices, and public ceremonies of repsect to elders living in the community are held regularly every year throughout the country.

UNUSUAL CUSTOM

There is another unusual custom. When the head of the family is absent from the breakfast or dinner table, the younger members of the family put the choice piece of curry on his plate as a mark of respect. This custom is called *u-cha* (placing the first bit).

However, no undue stress is laid on filial veneration, and this may partly explain why the Burmese have no family names. Each person has an individual name, and even the woman who marries retains her maiden name.

Women in Burma are theoretically regarded as being inferior to men but, in actual practice, they enjoy a privileged position. In many professions, and especially in trade, women outnumber men, and at social functions they often replace their husbands.

Marriage in Burma is a civil contract and its dissolution on reasonable grounds is as easy as the contract itself. In the presence of a few village elders, any man or woman can be declared married.

In the same way, if they have good reasons, they can go before a group of village elders and get divorced. When a husband dies or if there is a divorce, the widow (or widows if the deceased had more than one wife) or the divorcee gets an equitable share of the inheritance.

NO CASTE SYSTEM

Buddhist teachings are not only concerned with salvation in a future existence but are directly related to everyday welfare of the people. For instance, repairing a broken bridge or putting a buttress against the falling branches of a tree are regarded as meritorious deeds.

Digging wells for communal use, and placing pitchers of drinking-water under shady trees, so that passers-by may quench their thirst, are also merit-giving deeds. As there is no caste system in Burma a clean pitcher of water is a welcome sight to everybody.

According to Burmese belief, any meritorious deed connected with water automatically confers ten cardinal virtues. The explanation of this belief may be that in tropical Burma cool refreshing water is always welcome.

This may also be the reason why the Burmese New Year, which begins in mid-April, the hottest month of the year, is ushered in by a water festival or thingyan.

The main idea of this festival, where there are no class distinctions, is to greet one's neighbours with water, wishing them a "cool, prosperous and peaceful" New Year.

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BUDDHIST MISSION TO GERMANY

(From a Correspondent)

SCENES reminiscent of the introduction of Buddhism to Ceylon were seen at Mihintale on Poson Day when the Buddhist Mission to Germany set out on their epoch-making journey.

The mission, which is sponsored by the German Dhammaduta Society (formerly the Lanka Dhammaduta Society), is the first of its kind to leave Ceylon for Europe and consists of three bhikkhus and two laymen.

The leader of the mission is the Ven. Soma Thero of Vajiraramaya, Bambalapitiya. The others are the Ven. Kheminda Thero and the Ven. Vinitha Thero, also of the Vajiraramaya, Mr. Asoka Weeraratne, founder and honorary secretary of the German Dhammaduta Society, and Mr. W. J. Oliver Soysa, are the laymen accompanying the bhikkhus.

THE BHIKKHUS

Soma Thero, 21 years a bhikkhu, has travelled widely in Asia on missionary work. His last visit was to India and Nepal for the Buddha Jayanthi celebrations there. For several years he was in Burma following a course of instruction in Satipattana method, the outcome of which was " The Way of Mindfulness ", an excellent book on meditation.

He is the author of several other books, including an English translation of the " Vimutti " (a work belonging to the Chinese Tripitaka) and " Right Understanding ".

For ten years Soma Thero enjoyed the seclusion of the Dodanduwa Island Hermitage—centre of European bhikkhus in Ceylon founded by the late Nayanatiloka Maha Thero—studying and meditating. There he picked up a knowledge of German.

Kheminda Thero was admitted to the Sangha together with Soma Thero, in Burma, in 1936. Since that day they have laboured together in the service of the Dhamma, visiting various countries such as Thailand, India and Nepal.

Vinitha Thero entered the Sangha in 1949, as a pupil of the late Pelene Vajiranana Mahanayaka Thero. He visited England in 1954 with Narada Thero and distinguished himself by his work at the London Buddhist Vihara. He was a delegate to the Sixth Buddhist Council in Rangoon in 1955. Last year, he attended the World Buddhist Conference in Nepal.

IN HAMBURG

The mission will set up headquarters in Hamburg and begin a systematic propagation of Buddhism first in Germany and later in Western Europe.

Their task has been made easy by the fact that Buddhism is not new to Germany. Ever since Arthur Schopenhauer published " The World as Will and Idea " in 1818, many educated Germans had shown an interest in this religion which appeals to the intellect. But it was much later that Buddhism began to gain ground in that country.

The process was hastened by great scholars such as Dr. Karl Speidenstucker, who founded the first Buddhist Society in Germany in 1903, Prof. H. Oldenberg, Prof. Wilhelm Geiger, R. O. Rfanka, Dr. Karl Neumann, Dr. Paul Dahlke and the Ven. Nyanatiloka Maha Thero. They made the new religion known to their countrymen by making numerous translations direct from the Pali Tripitaka.

Dahlke was the leading light of Buddhism in Germany until his death in 1928. But it is to Nyanatiloka Thero that we owe the present state of Buddhism in that country. From his ordination in 1903 until his death in Ceylon, he endeavoured to establish the Buddha Sasana in his native land. The present mission is a tribute to his indefatigable efforts.

WELL-KNIT GROUP

The work of Nyanatiloka Thero, in particular, and of the German Buddhists, in general, was rudely interrupted by the Hitler regime. While the

(*Continued on page* 15)

Notes of the Month

Largest Bronze Statue of the Buddha

THE largest bronze statue of the Buddha has been now discovered to be in Lhasa. It is 130 feet high and is a sitting figure with the right hand in the posture of benediction.

An undoubted miracle of metal casting, it is housed in a special chapel in the Tashilunpo Monastery, the winter residence of the Panchen Lama.

The story appeared, and probably known to the outside world for the first time, in Alec Winnington's " Lhasa—Record of a Journey ". The book which was published in London is the result of a jeep journey on the new road which connects China with Tibet.

RUSSIANS SEE TOOTH RELIC

Russian and Chinese Buddhists were given the privilege of entering the inner Shrine Room of the Dalada Maligawa or the Temple of the Tooth at Kandy, and seeing the sacred Tooth Relic of the Buddha at a special exposition.

They were delegates to the World Peace Council conference which was held in Colombo.

The Ven. Chu Tsan, vice-president of the Buddhist Association of China, bowed to the ground three times in homage to the sacred Relic, after it had been taken out of the seven golden caskets and placed in the glass casket.

The Ven. Sharapov, head of the Buddhists of the USSR, who was dressed in a long yellow cloak, showed deep emotion as he paid obeisance to the sacred Relic.

The Ven. Chu Tsan and the Ven. Sharapov donated Rs. 1,000 to the Temple reconstruction fund. Others who were present at the exposition were the delegates from Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and other Eastern Countries.

CANOPY FOR STATUE

The Archaeological Department of Ceylon has at long last decided to build a structure to protect the world famous Samadhi Buddha statue at Anuradhapura from the vagaries of the weather.

This step has been taken following the recent visit of the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, to Anuradhapura.

Mr. Nehru, during his tour of the sacred monuments of Anuradhapura, said that adequate precautions should be taken to prevent the statue deteriorating any further by being exposed to sun and rain.

The Government has instructed the Archaeological Department to prepare plans for a suitable structure in keeping with ancient Sinhala sculpture.

Archaeologists and lovers of art who have visited Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa have often expressed the fear that if no precautions are taken, a few decades hence, not only the Samadhi Buddha statue but also several specimens of Sinhala sculpture in stone will be lost to posterity.

Several other Buddha statues and a number of rock images are also unprotected.

BUDDHA PLAQUE

The Asutosh Museum, Calcutta University, has recently acquired a remarkable plaque with an inscribed image of the Lord Buddha from Tilda, a village in Midnapor district.

The inscription on the plaque is in typical Gupta character of the fifth century A.C. A very rare specimen of ancient terracotta art of Bengal, the plaque has thrown new light on a great civilisation.

According to Professor D. P. Gosh, Curator of the Museum, the Buddha image in relief on the plaque testifies to the Chinese account about the existence of many Buddhist sanctuaries in the kingdom of Tamralipta.

The relief on the plaque shows the Buddha seated on a throne supported by rocks and clad in a garment covering both shoulders. The sensitive fingers of the hands describe the *Dharmachakra Pravartana mudra* representing the delivery of the first sermon by the Buddha.

CHINESE BUDDHISTS

The Chinese Buddhist Association held its second national conference in Peking in March this year.

Two hundred delegates representing Buddhists of eleven different nationalities from all parts of China and including the Living Buddhas, lamas, monks, nuns and laymen, Hans, Tibetans, Tais and Mongolians, attended the meeting.

The conference elected the Ven. Shirob Jaltso, a Tibetan Buddhist dignitary, as chairman of the association, together with eleven vice-chairmen and 220 council members reviewed the work of the association and adopted a revised constitution.

The association, which was founded in June 1953, has done much to spread a knowledge of Buddhism. Many local branches have been set up and a number of famous monasteries restored.

It has established a Buddhist Institute and collected and published sutras and much literature on Buddhist records.

It has also done a great deal to foster friendly ties with foreign Buddhists, particularly by arranging a series of reciprocal visits to and from India, Burma, Nepal, Japan and elsewhere.

The conference endorsed the work done and called for its continuance and extension.

As many speakers said, Buddhism is above all else a religion of peace, and the association had a great task before it—to rally all Chinese Buddhists to work for their country and to promote friendship and co-operation between Buddhists of all lands as a contribution to world peace.

IN POLAND

The Polish Buddhist, Mr. W. Misiewicz has given several lectures on Buddhism under the auspices of the local branches of the Polish Academy of Sciences. He also had a radio broadcast with an interview by the speaker of Radio Poland on " The Problems of Buddhism ".

Mr. Misiewicz wrote a letter to the former Polish Premier, Mr. Joseph Cryankiewicz, before his departure on his tour to the Orient, on the importance of the youth of Poland to have some grounding on ethics and a knowledge of the ethics of Buddhism.

STUPAS UNEARTHED

The Dharmodaya Sabha of Nepal has discovered an Asoka stupa west of Lumbini, the birthplace of the Buddha. The stupa was found buried in the earth. The Sabha also recently announced the discovery of two Asoka pillars in the same area.

Two big upright pillars and one coping stone belonging to a Buddhist stupa of the second century have been discovered, according to Mr. K. D. Bajpai, Curator of the Archaeological Museum, in Mathura.

The first pillar, he said, was the biggest Buddhist architectural piece so far discovered in Mathura. It measures 16 feet and is carved on three sides.

STATUE PRESENTED

The Ambassador of Pakistan in Italy, Mr. S. K. Dehlavi, presented a Bodhisatva statue, a sample of Gandhara art, to President Giovanni Gronchi.

This was presented on behalf of the Government of Pakistan. It belongs to the second century A.C.

At present a co-ordinated Italo-Pakistan attempt is being made in the Swat Valley to bring to light the works of art in which it abounds.

BUDDHIST ON THE MARCH

" Buddhism is now becoming aggressively missionary. Hundreds of thousands are becoming Buddhists in India today. This religion is taking on a semi-political colouring. A one hundred per cent. Burmese has come to mean a Buddhist Burmese ".

This statement was made by an Indian bishop, Dr. Rajah B. Manikar, Bishop of Tranquebar, at the World Lutheran Assembly held in Minneapolis, USA.

" It is in Asia ", he added, " that Christianity has got to come to grips with non-Christian religions ".

ENCYCLOPAEDA OF BUDDHISM

BY VINCENT PANDITA

(*General Secretary, Lanka Bauddha Mandalaya*)

THE Encyclopaedia of Buddhism, the Specimen Volume of which was published a few weeks ago, is a project sponsored by the Government of Ceylon not only as a permanent undertaking in commemoration of Buddha Jayanti but also as a contribution to international culture.

It is in recognition of the value of this task by Ceylon that the UNESCO under the auspices of the International Council of Philosophy and the Humanities gave financial aid towards the printing of the Specimen Volume with a grant of 900 U.S. dollars.

The volume which has now been compiled gives an indication of the major work and the articles which have been published are all complete in themselves. Though technically subject to further review by the learned Board of Editors, they are virtually in their final form.

A task on these comprehensive lines has not been previously attempted—in Ceylon or, for a matter of that, in any other country as far as Buddhistic studies are singled out. It is pertinent here to remember that there is not even a complete Bibliography of Buddhism. This lack is the first difficulty which has to be overcome.

On the other hand, there are working Bibliographies which are of considerable assistance. There are also Encyclopaedias such as Dr. Mochisuki's " Bukkyo Dia Jiten " and " Hobogrin, " as well as Hasting's " Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics " which are handy; but their scope is restricted.

FORMIDABLE TASK

The Encyclopaedia of Buddhism under preparation is designed to cover every aspect of Buddhistic studies with no emphasis on any particular school of thought. It will deal with the religion and philosophy, psychology and ethics and their growth throughout the centuries, sacred places, literature, festivals, art and architecture, popular beliefs, and an almost endless variety of such topics.

Therefore, the task before the compilers is a very formidable one and when carried out will be a worthy achievement which should earn the appreciation of many generations.

Quite a number of good people in the country have failed to understand the purpose of the present Encyclopaedia. This is mainly due to the reason that the compilation has been undertaken by personnel subscribing to orthodox Theravada in a country the majority of whose population do not hold " heterodox " views. In other words, they think that the Encyclopaedia should concern itself with the orthodox view and none other. Still others hope that through it there will be propaganda and publicity for " pure Buddhism ".

THE POLICY

If these views are held in respect of an Encyclopaedia of Buddhism, it would be injurious to the very concept and scope of the Encyclopaedia. Our policy is pure and detached recording of facts or events or movements and not the personal viewpoint except sometimes the assessment by an impartial observer of contending claims on the basis of history. For this purpose the requirement is that the author should be an overall student of the subject to the extent that he is acknowledged for his competence in it.

To cite an illustration, the late Pierre Dupont who had written a treatise on Pre-Angkorean Images was no Buddhist but a Roman Catholic. His work is assessed for his iconographical approach to the subject and not vitiated by being a non-Buddhist. Therefore, it is necessary for us to remember that it is merely incidental that the responsibility is being borne in a country of the orthodox school and in an office the chief personnel of which subscribes to the same school. It would be quite beside the point to think in terms of the relative truth of Theravada, Mahayana or any other school of Buddhist thought.

Another important point to be noted is that the articles are no mere rehashing of old material. They are new studies. They incorporate what is

reliable in the old and take cognizance of the latest research. An instance may be cited to illustrate this. In his article on Adam's Peak in the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, the eminent authority on Buddhism, T. W. Rhys Davids, mentioned that the " Samantapasadika " of Buddhagosha referred to the Buddha's visit to Samantakuta and leaving the imprint of His foot on the peak. This information the learned Rhys Davids culled from Skeen's " Adam's Peak ".

Skeen, however, had been furnished by Mudaliyar Louis de Zoysa with a Pali passage setting out the point which the Mudaliyar had stated to be from the " Samantapasadika. " Rhys Davids himself did not seek to verify whether the passage is to be found in the source claimed; he merely assumed it.

Now the writer of the article on " Adam's Peak " to the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism could not rest so easily content. Seeking to check the " source " he found that no known edition of the " Samantapasadika " has the passage furnished by Mudaliyar de Zoysa. Instead, it was found in " Sara Sangaha " by Siddhattha Thero of Dakkhinarama in Polonnaruwa in the reign of Parakramabahu II and Siddhattha Thero it was who stated that he found the visit mentioned in the Vinaya-Atthakatha. This again raises other issues which have to be examined in their own connections.

RESPONSIBILITY

What has to be borne in mind is that the responsibility of the writer of our article does not end with the authority of even the most eminent writer who may have preceded him. He has to do his own reasearch and place the results of the latest studies before the reader. And thus we see that the aim of our Encyclopaedia is to offer to the reader the results of the most up-to-date investigations.

So much in explanation of the approach. The task itself it will be seen, is one in which " hustle " is not desirable, even if it should be possible. On the other hand, it is steady application that will ensure comprehensiveness and thoroughness. Subjects have to be listed with care and those which require articles for themselves examined by competent authorities.

It is in this matter that there is cause for satisfaction. Acknowledged authorities and others qualified to judge have guaranteed their assistance in all ways. A Board of Editors, both local and foreign, are co-operating in the work and their names are the stamp of authority on the finished work.

FURTHER POINT

One further point needs to be mentioned. The Encyclopaedia is not a Dictionary. A Dictionary like the Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary would list every word and provide concise information, with a special eye to brevity and reference. An Encyclopaedia would contain articles at length on a variety of subjects and would be concerned with topics selected for their article-value as such and not with a view of collecting scraps of information under such-and-such a heading.

Whilst the Dictionary would be a mere guide and large Index, the Encyclopaedia would be a compendium of articles. The former is designed as a sign-post to research, but the latter provides information both for the research worker and, still more important to the seeker after knowledge—that is, the general reader.

The Encyclopaedia of Buddhism is being written in the English language in order to make it available in the most extensive medium presently available. Nothing stands in the way of its being translated into any language in due course. It is a work which Ceylon has taken the lead and is committed to financing and will be presenting as a contribution to the sum of world knowledge.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

(*Continued from page* 2)

I finally feel bound to endorse what the Editor of " Metta " says regarding the slow rate of advance Buddhism is making in this country. We also find the Asian students have not contributed anything though we do not blame them for that. On the other hand I personally feel that vigorous proselytising is not of the essence of Buddhism. But we do endeavour to make contact with others who may be interested and are pleased when we succeed in doing so.

With best wishes and thanks to you for the excellent material which is presented each month in your columns.

H. A. Finlay
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of Tasmania.
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Tasmania.

PRINCIPLES OF PANCHA SILA

By G. P. MALALASEKERA

(President, World Fellowship of Buddhists)

The following is the Presidential Address delivered by Dr. G. P. Malalasekera at the 32nd Annual Session of the Indian Philosophical Congress held at Srinagar, Kashmir.

I AM deeply conscious of the great honour that has been conferred on me by being appointed President of this august assembly. I am also profoundly aware of my own unworthiness for such exalted distinction. I recall with immense pride that this Congress had, as its first President, Rabindranath Tagore, who for more than half a century dominated the intellectual scene not only of India but also of the whole of Asia and further beyond.

Since then, the Presidential dais has been occupied by a galaxy of brilliant personages, in comparison with whom I would appear a mere glow-worm. I derive courage and consolation, however, from the fact that in promoting me to this high office, the Congress has recognised not any particular merit on my own part but the significance of a great event, the Buddha Jayanti, the 2500th anniversary of the Buddhist Era, which has been celebrated with great *eclat* in many countries and with special splendour in India, the land of the Sakyamuni's birth.

By electing a Buddhist to preside over this year's deliberations therefore the Congress has sought to take notice of this significant event and, as President of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, I should like on behalf of the Buddhists of the world to convey to the members of the Congress our profound gratitude for this noble gesture.

BUDDHIST HALLMARK

This same fact has promoted me to select as topic for my address to you as General President, the Philospohical Implications of Pancha Sila, the Five Vows or Precepts the observance of which every Buddhist voluntarily takes upon himself.

So closely is Pancha Sila associated with Buddhism that when someone of another faith wishes to indicate that he has now become a follower of the Buddha, he does so by repeating, in some suitable place, preferably in front of a Buddharupa or at the foot of a Bodhi-tree, a formula in which he declares that he has accepted the Three Refuges (the Buddha, his Doctrine and the Sangha, the holy Order of Monks) and undertakes to observe the Pancha Sila.

This formal act of conversion—if one may so call it—is taken to mean that he has now received the hallmark of the true Buddhist. The repetition of this formula, on awaking and on retiring and on every formal occasion of a religious character, marks for the Buddhist what would correspond to the " progress " of followers of other faiths.

It sums up for him not only the fundamental principles of his ethical conduct but also the philosophy underlying the whole of the Buddha's teaching.

WAY OF LIFE

I do not propose to discuss here whether Buddhism could be better described as a religion or a philosophy. The Buddha himself called his teaching a *patipada*, a Way of Life. Generally speaking, Buddhism is accepted as one of the world-religions, in fact, the oldest of the historical world-religions.

There is no need to enter into the perplexing question of the definition of " religion, " for we know in a general way what is meant by a man's religious faith, opinions and practices. Religious beliefs differ, for instance, from economic or political principles in that though the latter are concerned with very important aspects of life, they are limited in their scope, whereas in our religion we express our total reaction to the universe.

It regulates and directs our total reaction to every aspect of experience—or, at least, claims to do so. It is true that in every day life religion is largely composed of traditional ways of acting and thinking, which are only partially grasped, dimly

understood and vaguely accepted by the individual. But religion, in its essential nature, is an all-embracing world-view and the determiner of life's values. All the major concerns of humanity living in society presuppose some belief which is in its nature religions.

INTELLECTUAL CREATURE

Man is an ideational creature. Men's conduct and their institutions are shaped by what they assume to be real and important, true and false, right and wrong. What men desire their society to become, their vision of a tolerably satisfactory community are profoundly affected by the beliefs they hold about the nature of man, about the nature of the universe as a whole and man's relation to it.

Our beliefs determine the qualities we want to foster in ourselves and in others. Human beings, thus, develop what are called values, and these constitute their philosophies. Chesterton has declared that every man has his philosophy and that this is the most practical and important thing about him.

Philosophy, in the minds of many, is concerned with the abstract, scholarly study of concepts and ideas, far removed from the practical issues of the everyday world. They think of a philosopher as a long-haired eccentric individual, whose chief interest is an attempt to master the secrets of the universe, regardless of whether his search has any useful significance or not.

But there is also another concept of philosophy which recognises it as a study that should make life here and now as intelligible, meaningful and purposeful as possible. Such a concept implies that the most important obligation of any individual is to clarify his basic beliefs and assumptions. He should be able to state, explain, organise and defend the premises upon which he bases his scientific, political, economic, religious and educational practices.

It should be the concern of every citizen to develop such a personal philosophy to enable him to cope with the numerous problems arising daily in our complex society. It must be admitted, however, that as far as the vast majority of us are equipped with anything like an outlook on life and the world, it consists mainly of a great deal of superstition about the supernatural, a smattering of social theory, a whole heap of group-prejudices, a few wise saws, a rumour or two from science and a number of slipshod observations about life.

So long as this state of mind exists, there will be in our minds only a chaos of immediate experience, like that of small children. Historical man begins definitely in a culture only by bringing order into his experiences and demanding a consistent explanation of them.

(To be continued)

Buddhist Mission to Germany

(*Continued from page 9*)

bhikkhu was interned in Ceylon the Nazi Government oppressed Buddhists and their activities. Buddhist publications and group meetings were prohibited. Prominent Buddhists were summoned for interrogation by the Gestapo.

Among them was Kurt Fischer Dhalke's secretary, who died after one such interrogation. In spite of these grave dangers, some of the German Buddhists continued to hold meetings in secret. It was indeed a grave risk that they took in order to give the solace of the Dhamma at a time when their fellow members needed it most.

Buddhist activities were restarted soon after the war. In Hamburg a society was re-established with Dr. Helmut Palmie as president. It is one of the most active Buddhist groups in Germany and will be the headquarters of the Ceylon mission. In Berlin, as well as in other leading cities, Buddhist groups have been organised so that today the 5,000 Buddhists there are a well-knit group.

Many of them have not seen a bhikkhu before. In fact, it is as living examples of the Teaching that the bhikkhus have been invited. What the German Buddhists need so much is not knowledge of the Dhamma, which they can gain from books, as people leading the ideal Buddhist life who could inspire and guide them to achieve the maximum benefits of the religion.

Book Review

Encyclopaedia of Buddhism: Specimen Volume. Published jointly by the Lanka Bauddha Mandalaya and the Department of Cultural Affairs, Colombo, Ceylon. Crown quarto size, 83 pp., 26 illustrations, 2 maps. Rs. 4/50.

DR. G. P. Malalasekera, Ceylon's Ambassador in the USSR, and President of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, has in this fascicule offered a cross-section of articles which represent the idea of the Encyclopaedia. We are now able to form a correct impression of what the finished work will be.

We read the following names among the learned authors:—The Venerables C. Nyanasatta and Nanamoli, His Royal Highness Prince Dhaninivat of Thailand, Professors S. Paranavitane and Junsho Tanaka, Drs. S. Dutt, B.C. Law, W. Pachow and Benjamin Rowland and Mr. K. N. Jayatilleke.

The longer articles are on Abayagiri (D. T. Devendra), Anicca, Art and Architecture (Ceylon, Gandhara, Thailand), Asoka (H. G. A. van Zeyst), Asvagosha, Bodhidarma, Brahma (Bandula Jayawardene), Attainment of Buddhahood, Paccekabuddha (H. S. Cooray), Positivism in Buddhism and Sanghakamma. With short notes there is a total of seventy-five to eighty thousand words in close-packed type which has been used.

The published articles conform to the best academic tradition, even as they indicate a high level of scholarship on the part of the authors. While taking stock of the latest research, they also reveal that true restraint in expression and economy of language, which are the result of mature study.

The Encyclopaedia of Buddhism of which this is a mere glimpse, is planned to be published in ten volumes, each of 1,000 pages. It is obvious that such an outstanding work will take several years to reach the end of the first stage of labours, with its first Edition.

The Specimen Volume before us is the assurance that the work will be a worthy one. The Government of Ceylon, which has sponsored it as a memorial of Buddha Jayanti, deserves the thanks of all, particularly those who love scholarship. There has never been a comprehsensive work of its kind in the English language, or any other language.

(Copies may be obtained, post free, from the General Secretary, Lanka Bauddha Mandalaya, Department of Cultural Affairs, Colombo, at Rs. 4/50).

MAHIMAN AMARASURIYA

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